

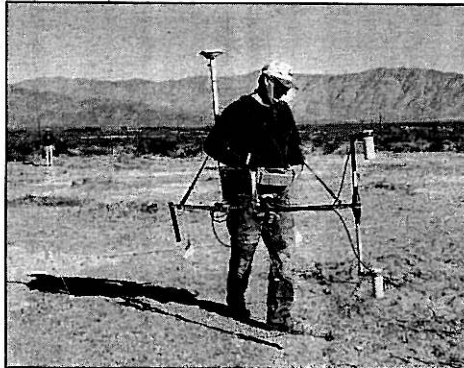
Ordnance-locating devices tested for use in Borrego

Contractors for the Army Corps of Engineers tested two different detectors in Borrego Springs last week in an effort to determine which technology will best locate military ordnance buried in desert terrain.

The efforts took place on an acre of land behind American Legion Post 853 on Borrego Springs Road. Called a "geophysical prove-out," the series of tests is required to move ahead with a remedial investigation of military ordnance that might be found in more than 400-square miles in the Anza-Borrego desert.

The Corps hopes to start investigating Clark Dry Lake in February as part of a study to determine how much military ordnance remains in the Borrego Maneuver Area and what potential threats the leftovers might pose.

"It's important to stress that this is not a cleanup," said Armando Lucero, project manager with MARRS services and the on-site manager for the BMA investigation. "Once we're done with our remedial investigation, say for Clark Dry Lake, that doesn't mean it's clean."



GEOPHYSICIST
Brian Hecker of
MARRS Services
scans a patch of
desert to test
ordnance
detection
equipment.

SUN photo by
MARIS BRANCHEAU

Rather, the study will lead to a decision document that will provide the Corps with details on the extent of military ordnance and an estimate of the cost to clean up the areas. Parts of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area will be studied.

"We will, of course, remove anything we come across that is potentially explosive," Lucero explained.

"But we're still talking with the park about leaving some of the materials that have detonated. The park considers some of that to have historic value."

Two devices, one hand-held and the other towed on wheels, were tested to determine which provides more accurate Global Positioning System information. MARRS buried more than 40 items near the Legion,

including 3-lb. practice bombs and 40mm anti-aircraft rounds, some as deep as six feet.

Additionally, two other agencies buried more simulated munitions in undefined locations within the plot to serve as quality control. Geophysicist Brian Hecker walked in transects, and over every inch of the flagged acre with both machines. A data logger worn on his belt collected the information on any anomalies picked up by the GPS systems.

The two machines, an EM61 and a 858 geonetic, cost more than \$20,000 each. Lucero estimated it would take more than three months to cover a very small percentage of Clark Dry Lake.

No vehicles will be allowed to tow the wheeled device in ABDSP. Survey times could be shortened in portions of OWSVRA where a tractor will tow the GPS device.

Surveys will have to stop by June of '07 because the heat is too hard on the electronics. The remedial investigation could wrap up in early 2009, Lucero said.